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IDEALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE NEWARK SCHOOL SYSTEM

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The belief which animates the people of Newark is that the children of the city constitute its chief asset, and the great civic ideal is to provide in a liberal manner the inestimable privileges of education. The facilities of the school system are available for community service and there is active effort to instruct not only the foreign adult but all who seek self-improvement and advancement. The feeling is clearly defined and often expressed by citizens that the amount of money expended is of less concern than that it shall be wisely spent to insure equal and adequate educational opportunity for all.

The ideal which animates the management and leadership of the schools is that education consists not only in the attainment of knowledge but in the formation of right habits, the acquisition of requisite manual and intellectual skill, and the development of personal power and worthy character. It is apprehended that in the long sweep of man's upward struggle education for the people, especially American education, is comparable in its possibilities for the benefit and the uplift of humanity to the development of Hebrew literature, Greek philosophy, Roman law, and Anglo-Saxon constitutional liberty, those forces in the domain of the human spirit that have molded the civilization of the most progressive nations of today.

One of the great ideals of the school system is the *conservation of health* so that pupils may be strong and physically fit. The aim is not only that individual personal improvement shall be made but that a nation of hardier men and women shall be developed. The accomplishments include existing health clubs and health associations organized to form health habits based upon the instruction given in hygiene. The course in physical education includes

play, dancing, swimming, calisthenics, gymnastics, and athletics. Most of the schools have well-equipped gymnasiums, and there is a large athletic field where competitive games and athletic contests are held. Much attention is given to mass athletics, the theory being that the varsity teams have their place in fixing standards of athletic prowess and in creating loyalty to the several schools, but that all students must be trained for physical endurance and achievement.

Play is recognized as of great educational value. All but one of the regular schools have well-equipped kindergartens. Games are played in the elementary grades, and organized play is substituted for the old-time disorderly recess. The playground system comprises after-school, summer, and all-year playgrounds. The last were, until two years ago, operated under the Municipal Playground Commission. The Board of Education now controls all organized play activities. The program includes social and recreational centers open at night, where clubs meet and games and dancing are encouraged under supervision.

The city is divided into medical inspection districts with a physician in charge of each, and with trained nurses assigned to the several schools. The medical department is under the Board of Education. It has its own building and its own clinics for dental, optical, and orthopedic cases. At first specialists in the city gave their services gratuitously, but there are now paid clinicians. There is an advisory board of three distinguished physicians who serve without remuneration to aid the medical and physical-education departments in the corrective work in orthopedic, goiter, and cardiac cases. The psychological clinic has a specialist of broad training and extensive experience with two trained assistants, and another specialist who assists in the mental examination of children.

Still another great ideal is *preparation for a vocation* in order that all may be producers of wealth, each able to do his part in a democratic society. It is evidenced first in the prevocational work done in the special activities in the alternating schools. These activities are gardening, cobbling, printing, typewriting, wood-working, electrical wiring, mechanical drawing, sewing, cooking,

and costume and other designing. In these schools daily recitations in double periods in some one of these activities are provided for both boys and girls. The definite purposes are to obtain full educational value of the subjects and to discover the aptitude of each child for manual work.

The evening schools provide not only work of similar nature and about the same scope for youth and adults, but some work more clearly vocational which appeals to those employed in the trades who desire to improve themselves. We have a school of industrial arts with a large evening enrolment. The teachers are skilled artisans from the shops of the city and artists engaged in the practice of their respective occupations. This insures highly specialized instruction. The purpose of the school is to prepare students to unite the skill of the trained artisan with the knowledge and taste of the artist so that utility and beauty may be combined in manufactured products. Through schools of this type America may eventually lead the world in the industrial arts.

The vocational work consists of continuation classes in factories, continuation schools of the prevocational type, and vocational schools. The factory classes are fewer than we desire, but we hope that, the war ended and other retarding conditions removed, they may soon rapidly increase in number. Their usefulness is great in that they afford a means of broadening the education of the worker in his special field. The continuation schools were opened in September last and are for children between the ages of fourteen and sixteen to whom "age and schooling certificates" have been issued. The intent is to provide instruction for six hours per week of an academic and prevocational character, giving to each equal time. There is a vocational school for boys and one for girls. The range of their work is that usually found in schools of this type. The object of these schools is the preparation of students for productive work in the industries. The Board of Education is now constructing a new building to accommodate eight hundred boys, at a cost of more than a million dollars. It will be equipped with modern machinery and appliances. Doubtless it will favorably affect the industrial life of the city through the ability and efficiency of its graduates.

There are other types of school work not generally called vocational—the art, the commercial, and the academic. We have in the Newark high schools a curriculum which provides for the election of four years of either music or art as majors, thus permitting gifted students in either of these fields to obtain a good, general high-school education while studying the special vocational subject. The commercial curriculum provides, in addition to the special technical subjects of the bookkeeper, clerk, or stenographer, that cultural subjects shall also be studied. The academic curricula have for their objectives normal-school or college admission with a professional career in mind and are vocational in that they are prerequisites for study in higher institutions. The school, no matter what general aims it may have, provides, either immediately or mediately, preparation for vocational activity of some kind. Young Americans look forward to useful careers in adult life. It is desirable to inaugurate a system of educational guidance founded upon psychological tests that shall eventually assist pupils to select the type of life-work they may be by native ability and training fitted to do efficiently.

The dominant educational ideal of the Newark school system is the development of sterling character. To achieve it there are three subsidiary ideals, namely, to make the instruction in the schools vital and not formal, to make the school organization flexible and comprehensive, and to make capable and successful teachers as happy as possible.

The chief subsidiary ideal in our schools is that *instruction shall be vital and purposeful*, not merely formal; that it shall definitely mold character according to the highest standards in order to make the social adjustments of the individual self-directive, co-operative, and altruistic. To accomplish this, courses of study have been simplified and modernized. An example of the progress made is in the teaching of reading and literary appreciation. The high schools complain that the elementary schools “poach upon their preserves” in the use of the masterpieces. In each upper elementary grade a play of Shakespeare is read, not for structural analysis, but for enjoyment. Civic, economic, political, and other important questions are discussed in a manner that would be

creditable to adults. The results of the instruction have been tested in a number of surveys of the essential subjects conducted by our own department of reference and research. Two series of educational meetings are held each year by members of the superintendent's staff for the direction and inspiration of teachers.

Children of fortunate parents are well equipped to profit by instruction when they enter school because of favorable environment and association. There are many under-privileged children in the schools who lack this preparation. We have discovered that in our bilingual schools the best-informed and most capable children are the truants whose excursions from home and school have enriched their knowledge and language and developed their minds. We have in the school system a secondary means for providing this enriching experience in a department of visual education, well organized and well equipped with a central film library and with apparatus in many schools for showing the pictures. Programs are arranged in the superintendent's office and are planned for instruction and not entertainment. This department provides the opportunity for privileged as well as under-privileged children to broaden their knowledge by observation in widely extended fields.

Another means to make instruction function as vitally as possible is an important experiment in the classification of children in the Newark schools now well inaugurated. The standard size of classes is thirty pupils in grades above the seventh, and forty pupils in grades below the eighth, but smaller classes are authorized in shops and special departments, and in cases where the right grading requires it. The plan is to have classes of reasonable size and to make them as homogeneous as possible and to adjust the subject-matter of instruction in both quantity and quality to the ability of the children. The scheme of classification is:

- I. The supernormal children, or those intellectually superior.
- II. The normal children, divided into three main groups:
 - a) The *ones*, those intellectually bright and able to do work of three five-month terms in two.
 - b) The *twos*, those ordinarily capable and able to do the work of a five-month term in five months.

- c) The *threes*, those slow, but able to do the work of a five-month term in approximately seven months.

III. The subnormal children, divided into three groups:

- a) The moral defectives, those incorrigible or chronically insubordinate.
- b) The physical defectives, such as the deaf, or otherwise physically handicapped.
- c) The mental defectives, the morons, and high-grade imbeciles.

It is estimated that about 2 per cent of the school population is of superior intelligence and that these children are deprived of their rights by hampering conditions in ordinary classes. The desirable plan is to segregate them, to afford them ample opportunity to gain time in their educational career, and to provide instruction fitted to their capacities and needs. We have not yet fully developed our plan, but it is reasonable to assume that in due time there will be centers established for these children. Temporarily the supernormal are classed with the *ones* of the normal division. In large schools it is possible to have whole classes of *ones*, or *twos*, or *threes*; in small schools it is necessary to have two separate groups in the same class. It is desirable, for programming reasons, to have whole classes, whenever practicable, of the same level of intelligence. The instruction can then be adapted to the children. When any grade of work has been finished, in either the bright or the slow classes, examinations are held, and those found fit are advanced, necessary adjustments being made at any time. We have restoration classes in the elementary schools for those who for any reason have fallen behind, and coaching or service classes in the high schools. During the summer, elementary and high schools are maintained to assist pupils to improve their work and to gain time by extra study.

It is clear that we cannot use the same standard of accomplishment in these different classes. The *twos* are not able to do the same quality any more than the same quantity of work as the *ones*; nor is it possible for the *threes* to compete with the *twos*. There must then be recognized three different treatments of the same subject: that for the *threes*, limited in nature with much formal

drill; that for the *twos*, not so formal but broader in scope with more associations; that for the *ones*, even broader in character, including more content and a study of relations, such as cause and effect. The three treatments may be termed the *mechanical*, the *conventional*, and the *philosophical*. Different programs of study may be developed in time for these different groups of pupils in order to meet the needs.

The treatment of the subnormals probably does not differ from that of other large school systems in the country. A few observations, however, may be of interest. The moral defectives are transferred, when necessary, after full investigation by the department of compulsory attendance, to schools distant from their homes, on the theory that a new environment and new associations may effect reform. If not successful, they are, after examination by the psychologist, sent to special schools called ungraded schools where every effort is made to adapt the instruction to the pupils. This is usually effective, but when it is not they are taken by court action from their ignorant parents and street associations and committed to the Newark City Home, an institution maintained in the country, where every possible provision is made for their welfare and education.

We are segregating as rapidly as possible all mental defectives in order that regular classes may be homogeneous. The policy in reference to such pupils does not include the isolated class, but a "Binet center" with a standard unit of at least five classes. This permits close classification and instruction under the departmental plan. The results from this policy may be judged by a study recently made of one hundred pupils to determine whether the instruction functioned to a reasonable degree. Eighty-eight of the hundred *graduates* followed up are successful in maintaining themselves and in their home occupations. Twelve are waste on the social sea. The facts indicate that the instruction does function.

Another plan in making instruction function as vitally as possible is the method of teaching the manual arts and some other subjects of the curriculum. In Newark manual arts were taught for many years by giving one lesson a week in all grades, with the exception of domestic science in Grades VII A and VIII A in place

of domestic art. The one-lesson-a-week plan did not afford sufficient time for pupils to acquire the desirable skill. The lessons were so far apart that interest was sporadic rather than cumulative, and much of the instruction needed repetition. We have introduced what has come to be called the "intensive method" of teaching the manual arts. This method consists of a lesson each day for boys in manual training and one each day for girls in domestic art or domestic science for a period of approximately five weeks, followed by the subjects of music, hygiene, and civics for an equal period of time. Drawing every day is then substituted for another five weeks, and so the alternation continues. The total number of school days in a five-month term is divided by four, which gives the exact number of consecutive lessons possible in these various subjects. By experiment it was demonstrated that the interest of pupils was greatly increased and that it was possible for them to acquire greater knowledge and skill because of the closer sequence and continuity of the work. The plan has been extended throughout the city and is giving marked satisfaction. The opinion is that the results are superior. The manual arts are under the direction of one head in order to secure the best possible co-ordination.

Another subsidiary ideal is that *the organization of the school system shall be as elastic as possible*. Newark has an all-year system of schools within her traditional system. There are ten of these schools ranging in enrolment from 1,522 to 2,568 pupils. There are elementary schools, two special schools, a junior high school, and a senior high school. There are four terms of twelve weeks each, with vacations coincident with those of the regular school system. It is possible for the capable children to cover the elementary course in six years instead of eight and the secondary course in three years instead of four. These schools were established for the people who desired their children to get through the schools as rapidly as possible. In normal times approximately 75 per cent of the children attend throughout the summer. Children who cannot keep the pace and must repeat grades have shorter periods of repetition. The plan is flexible and lends itself to the needs of the children. Those capable of gaining time have the

privilege; those who should not gain time need not be retarded beyond the period that they would have attended the traditional schools.

The traditional schools in Newark are being supplanted by the alternating or modified Gary schools. They begin at 8:30 in the morning and close at 3:45 in the afternoon. The plan of organization is valuable, because it primarily affords better educational opportunities. This kind of school is elastic and dynamic, while the traditional school is rigid and static. The alternating school, now a lusty infant, may be criticized by the conservative, but it is clearly evident that the faults are due to maladjustment and not to fundamental or organic defect. The plan of organization affords the needed opportunity for teaching an enriched curriculum.

Newark is developing, too, a system of junior high schools consisting of the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. At the present time none of these schools is in a building of its own, but all are in large elementary schools where the appeal of the new opportunity to begin secondary work early is an effective means of keeping the pupils in school for one more year. It is a well-known fact that great numbers of pupils do not survive the first year in the secondary schools; hence it is better to make the ninth year a goal from which pupils may depart, accredited as graduates of the junior high schools, rather than have them withdraw as castaways from the senior high schools. More pupils stay to finish the junior high school course than formerly remained for the first year in the senior high schools. The secondary schools will unquestionably be able, with the junior high schools acting as selective agencies, to maintain the high standards of academic scholarship which they greatly prize and which are somewhat jeopardized by the urge of democracy. The 6-3-3 organization fits educational practice more perfectly to the three stages of personal development—the transitional, the formative, and the adolescent periods.

The system includes a junior college, established two and one-half years ago, giving Freshman and Sophomore work of distinctly collegiate grade. While housed in a building with a

high school, the junior college is separate in aim, in methods of instruction, in texts used, in laboratory work, in recitations, and in customs and spirit. The faculty is composed of successful high-school and college instructors holding graduate degrees. Some of its faculty give instruction in both high school and college, but others do exclusively college work. The courses are arranged for students desiring to obtain the baccalaureate degree and for those wishing to enter secretarial, journalistic, or medical courses in other colleges or universities. Students must be graduates of a four-year high-school course, and must take college-admission examinations if they expect to proceed to a degree. Seventy of the best institutions in the country have agreed to admit the students on the same basis as students from other colleges. Fifteen of the seventeen graduates in June entered without conditions Rutgers, Brown, Princeton, the medical college of the University of Maryland, and other institutions of equal rank, and are making satisfactory and creditable records. This extension of opportunity is in a state that has no university supported by public funds and is in the conservative East where the privately endowed colleges and universities question carefully any innovation in the educational field.

The third subsidiary ideal is the *selection of good teachers and the conservation of their freedom and happiness*. The teachers are the most important factors in education because their insight and attainments and character influence the pupils powerfully through the intimate association of the schoolroom.

Newark has made provision for the selection of well-equipped and competent teachers by a system of competitive examinations conducted by a board of examiners composed of the superintendent and six professional associates. This board has the statutory right to license teachers. Its members must possess teachers' licenses or an education equivalent to that required to obtain them. In the past the board has been attacked by persons unable to secure favors for their friends, but the board and the system have survived. The work done in recommending teachers has been very important in making the schools efficient. The high professional standards long established and effectively maintained have given the city a corps of able and successful instructors.

Every large school system is confronted with a problem created by the growth of the city and the enlargement of schools. This sometimes results in "factoryizing" or "mechanizing" the schools and in reducing the idealism of the teacher to a warping, devitalizing realism. Teachers are deprived of initiative and of reasonable freedom by dictated methods of instruction, by irritating and numerous details of administration, and by a deadening formalism in all educational activities. Newark is definitely seeking to maintain a more desirable condition, to encourage the teacher's initiative, and to preserve his freedom in the classroom. Her ideal is that teachers shall co-operate willingly and whole-heartedly with the educational hierarchy and with each other in every way wherein team work is necessary.

The effort is made to secure the happiness of teachers by making the conditions under which they work comfortable and attractive and by providing adequate compensation for acceptable service. For years teachers have had permanent tenure after a probationary period. The teachers belong to a state disability and pension system. They are highly respected in the community, and their social position is as good as they, as individuals, may choose to make it. The salaries, though less than metropolitan salaries, are good. There have been several new schedules adopted in successive years and another will become operative in September next. The minimum salary will be \$1,500 in elementary schools, and the maximum \$4,400 for heads of departments in high schools. The annual increment is \$100 in the lower steps and \$200 in the upper steps or in the higher schedules.

During the formative period in the arrangement of the schedules referred to, the superintendent called to confer with him leading teachers of the city in whose judgment and discretion and honor he had confidence. This co-operation was most helpful. The Board of Education finally appointed a salary-schedule committee, composed of representatives of the board and of teachers' organizations, together with the superintendent and other officials to discuss and to formulate salary schedules and to prepare rules for their operation. Some years ago the superintendent developed a system of collegiate and professional training in co-operation with New York University for training teachers in service. To

stimulate teachers to broaden their scholarship and to improve their professional equipment by additional work in colleges or universities, there will become effective in September, 1921, a rule that permits teachers to be advanced one additional step on the schedule every three years provided they present certificates covering collegiate work, or an advanced degree, or research work of approved quality, and have made a record in the classroom of at least *good* during the period for which recognition is sought. Provision has also been made to abolish sex discrimination in salary wherever it may exist in the school system. Further, the superintendent in several cases in previous years recommended to the Board of Education the granting of leaves of absence of one year for postgraduate study, on salary less substitute's pay, to teachers of more than ten years' acceptable service. These precedents caused the board to formulate the policy of granting, under approximately the same conditions, leaves of absence for study and observation to teachers of ten years' service and a year for rest and recreation for twenty years' service. These measures are fair and just and worth while. They make teachers of ability and personal power feel that the profession of education is attractive, for there are rewards as well as opportunities for service and distinction.

The great national ideal of all educational effort is *the making of worthy and loyal American citizens*. For this we have an Americanization program for the adult foreign-born. It covers the maintenance of classes in the evening schools where not only spoken and written English is taught, but where the ideals of American life and character and the responsibilities of American citizenship are stressed. Other day classes of like purpose have been maintained in homes and factories, but their success has been less than those in the evening schools. The public-lecture and moving-picture courses given in schools, playgrounds, social centers, and in congested neighborhoods are additional means of helpful service. It is our intent to expand this work, not merely by providing opportunity, but by "going into the byways" to bring in the reticent and the timid. The menace to America in a large unassimilated population, especially threatening in the

great cosmopolitan centers, must be removed, and the blessings of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in this land of opportunity must be fully appreciated by ourselves and clearly understood by all who dwell among us. Not only do we seek to cultivate love for and loyalty to America among those we have welcomed here, but constant emphasis is placed upon moral values exemplified in the lives and character and achievements of great Americans and of the American people as a nation. The great intellectual leaders and those who, in spite of adversity, have won success in the industrial, commercial, or scientific worlds are respected, but the moral leaders are canonized in the hearts of American youth through the instruction and influence of the schools. The tremendous import of this fact in connection with the influence for righteousness of six hundred thousand teachers actuated by inspiring motives makes the American school an organized agency unparalleled in history for the inculcation of noble personal and national ideals. The call of democracy has not been for efficiency but rather an invitation to climb to the heights. The new call includes both of these. Some must serve in the ranks, others in positions of leadership, and the school system must train and educate all. There must be no blind lanes but rather open roads, broad and level, leading to the coveted goals of life—personal efficiency, worthy character, and thoughtful and loyal American citizenship.